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Letter dated 28 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

With reference to the candidature of the Slovak Republic to the Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020 and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, I have the honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Slovak Republic for its candidature to the Human Rights Council.

Slovakia, as a State party to all major human rights treaties, is fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels. As a member of the Human Rights Council during the period 2008-2011, Slovakia actively and constructively contributed to advancing the human rights agenda. It stands ready to further impart that approach to the work of the Human Rights Council.

(*Signed*) František **Ružička**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

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Candidature of Slovakia to the Human Rights Council, 2018-2020

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

Membership of the Slovak Republic in the Human Rights Council (2008-2011)

1. The Slovak Republic was first a member of the Human Rights Council during the period 2008-2011. During that period, it played an active role in the work of the Council relating to individual States and thematic issues, such as the preparation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. It supported the universal ratification of the United Nations human rights conventions and took part in the preparation of new international human rights standards, thereby improving the functioning of existing mechanisms such as the universal periodic review.

2. During the period of its membership, it played a significant role as a leader in and coordinator of the process of preparing the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which further strengthened guarantees for the protection of the rights of the child. The Slovak Republic was the first to sign the protocol and actively promotes its universal ratification. During 2010-2011, Slovakia held the post of Vice-President of the Human Rights Council.

3. The efforts of the Slovak Republic to make a positive and constructive contribution to the development and protection of human rights in the world, while building on the experience of previous membership in the most important human rights organ in the United Nations system, was the motivating factor for standing for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2018-2020.

Implementation of international human rights instruments

4. The Slovak Republic is a party to eight core human rights conventions of the United Nations and their optional protocols. Following the pledge made in connection with its candidature for the period 2008-2011, the Slovak Republic became a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto. International treaties on human rights and fundamental freedoms take precedence over the laws of the Slovak Republic. It fully cooperates with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and, in 2001, was one of the first countries to issue a standing invitation for a special procedures mission. The Slovak Republic actively participates in the universal periodic reviews of other States.

5. The Slovak Republic is a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court; it supports constructive dialogue with parties and non-parties to the Rome Statute with the objective of strengthening international criminal justice and the universality of the International Criminal Court.

6. Emphasizing the importance of protecting human rights at the international level, the Slovak Republic presents the following voluntary pledges and commitments:

- To support the efforts to incorporate human rights into all activities of the United Nations, including in the areas of development, peace and security
- To actively participate in the activities of the Human Rights Council with the aim of strengthening its effectiveness and credibility
- To become actively involved in the mechanism of the universal periodic review and promote the effective implementation of adopted recommendations
- To develop cooperation between the government sector and civil society, while calling for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the activities of the Council
- To work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and support its activities and independence
- To cooperate with the United Nations treaty bodies and strive for the timely presentation of national periodic reports in relation to the conventions by which the Slovak Republic is bound
- To support the universal ratification of human rights conventions of the United Nations
- To pay special attention to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
- To strengthen and support the rights of women and girls and equality between men and women in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- To promote the rights and interests of children, including the provision of quality education, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda
- To support the elimination of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in society
- To fight human trafficking and support the dignity and rights of victims of trafficking
- To support freedom of religion or belief and religious tolerance
- To continue to consistently support international law, including international humanitarian law
- To raise awareness of the prevention of sexual violence and violence against women during armed conflicts
- To pass on its own experiences in building democratic structures and human rights institutions to other countries in transition that express interest.

Implementation of national human rights instruments

7. Since its founding in 1993, the Slovak Republic has undergone profound changes associated with the renewal of the democratic character of the State and established a high-quality system for human rights protection at the national level.

8. The Government Council of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality is an adviser to and expert body of the Government of the Slovak Republic that acts to increase general awareness of human rights norms, knowledge of levels of compliance with them and measures adopted to enforce them. The Government Council emphasizes the recommendations of expert bodies and institutions of the United Nations and monitors developments and new laws in the area of human rights. The Council ensures that human rights are

discussed and strengthens dialogue between government institutions, the non-governmental sector and academia.

9. In 2015, the Government approved a national strategy to protect and support human rights in the Slovak Republic.

10. In order to further strengthen the protection of human rights at the national level, the Slovak Republic presents the following voluntary pledges and commitments:

- To support the rights of children in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child and fulfil the national action plan for children
- To strengthen institutional and practical protection of the rights of women in society and fulfil the national strategy for gender equality and the related action plan
- Within the framework of the national action plan for the elimination and prevention of violence against women, to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the mechanisms for the protection and support of victims of violence against women and domestic violence
- To fulfil the action plan on avoiding all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and intolerance
- To continue to work for the inclusion of groups of the population excluded from society with the aim of strengthening their human rights
- To fulfil the action plan for the protection of the human rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups
- To fulfil the strategy of the Slovak Republic for the integration of Roma up to 2020
- To ensure systematic support for the preservation, expression, protection and development of the identity and cultural values of national minorities and for education and training on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as well as inter-ethnic and intercultural dialogue and understanding
- To fulfil the national programme to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities
- To increase the safety of the elderly, defend them against maltreatment and violence and implement the national programme for active aging
- To build effective mechanisms for the prevention and suppression of human trafficking and implement the national action plan to combat human trafficking
- To promote education and training for human rights and democratic citizenship, including the prevention of racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination
- To intensify cooperation with developing countries, including assistance in the form of projects aimed at building democratic institutions and protecting human rights
- To support the activities of independent institutions, especially the Public Defender of Rights, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, the Commissioner for Children and Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities.